

A close-up photograph of two wild turkeys. The turkey in the foreground is on the left, facing right, with its head turned slightly towards the camera. It has dark, iridescent feathers with a prominent blue and red wattle. The second turkey is behind it, also facing right. The background is a soft-focus field of dry grass and foliage.

MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST

Serving Nature & You

April
2005

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Vantage Point

Community Conservation at Work

The Missouri Department of Conservation engages property owners, conservation groups and other government agencies to achieve its mission of serving fish, forests, wildlife and people. Partnership resources make larger, more expensive projects possible. They also enable people, organizations, and communities of all sizes to become personally involved in conservation.

Missouri's communities are among our most valuable and helpful partners. Since 1980, the Community Assistance Program has created close-to-home fishing and outdoor recreational opportunities for over 100 local partners. The Department manages the fish populations in community lakes and provides money to build public roads, parking lots, boat ramps and accesses to lakes, rivers and streams.

A great example is Riverfront Access on the beautiful Current River in my Missouri hometown, Van Buren. The Current River is a major recreational attraction in the Missouri Ozarks. For decades, the site where an old bridge was torn down has served as a focal point for community access to the river. As a little boy, I learned to swim in this same spot and started a life-long love of the Current River.

Van Buren community leaders needed help to provide quality access to this special Ozark stream and the resulting partnership is impressive. Private citizens worked with officials at the local, county, state and federal level to create this new destination on the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. Funds from federal excise taxes, the Conservation Commission and local sources allowed the partners to design and construct a large, multi-purpose river access with a boat ramp, canoe launch, picnic shelter, toilet facilities, ample parking and swimming areas. The project took about two years to complete at a cost of \$360,428 and now serves as an



attractive spot for many community activities.

Another great opportunity to provide community conservation is in Lewis County at LaBelle Lake. With the support of the region's State Representative and Senator, the Department moved to keep the popular 112-acre fishing area in public ownership. In addition to managing fish populations, the Department cooperatively maintains diverse hunting opportunities, a boat ramp and a picnic area with a pavilion. It's a pleasure to see public property providing value to so many citizens in diverse ways.

Today, planning and design are underway for other community assistance projects that will benefit even more Missouri towns. Community conservation is a shared responsibility whose future depends upon a mutual commitment to care for our natural resources.

Eighty-seven percent of all Missourians say they wish they had more time to enjoy nature. Bringing opportunities closer to home is one way your Department of Conservation strives to make our world greener, cleaner and more fun.

John D. Hoskins, Director

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Reflections

ERRING THINGS OUT

We omitted the word “except” in a sentence describing hand fishing regulations in our February issue. The sentence on page 27 should have read: “Catfish may not be taken from any man-made object, except from bona fide construction, such as bridges, docks, boat ramps and rock rip rap. In our March issue, we misidentified “Ozark Wildflowers” by Don Kurz as a Conservation Department publication. It was published by Falcon Press.

BIRD COVER

On the cover of the March 2005 mag is a little bird. What is it? We have one that lives on our back porch year-round. My mom talks to it every evening as it comes to roost. We live in South St. Louis County.

Dianna, Via Internet

Editor's Reply: That's a yellow-rumped warbler. Here are a few web sites with good information about the species: <<http://birds.cornell.edu/BOW/YERWAR/>>, <<http://birds.cornell.edu/>>

programs/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Yellow-rumped_Warbler_dtl.html.>.

A GRIN FOR VIRGIL

I came upon the notice of Virgil Ward's death in your magazine. Growing up in Union, I always enjoyed Mr. Ward's show, and always thought he would be a decent man to meet. I'm surprised that he'd been on TV that many years.

I'm now 49 years old, and had a good grin remembering him. Thanks for publishing the announcement.

David M. Wente, Steelville, Ill.

DON'T FLUSH

I just got done reading your article on poison ivy and gasped when the author suggests using cool running water to clean your hands if you've been exposed.

From someone that has tried that, let your readers know that is a mistake. All the water does is spread the oil around to other parts of your body, which spreads the “evil”. Use dishwashing liquid or something that cuts through the oil immediately. I would rather do

nothing, or wipe my hands off on a towel (then bury it) than use water.

Jack Russell, Ballwin

Editor's note: Most authorities suggest washing infected areas with soap and water within 15 minutes of contact to remove poison ivy resin.

HIDDEN EROSION

I enjoyed reading the article “Creating a Better Place for Wildlife,” but I question the practice of pushing brush and logs into ravines. Instead of preventing it, this practice encourages soil erosion!

The brush and logs impede the smooth flow of the water in the ravine. As the water flows around objects, it cuts into the soil. In time, the erosive forces create a deeper and wider ravine. This increased erosion is often hidden by the brush and logs in the ravine.

To keep soil on your land, don't push brush or treetops into ravines.

People with water flow questions or problems can contact their County Soil and Water Conservation District for assistance. These offices work hand in hand with the Conservation Department.

*Jackie Moore, District Manager,
Soil & Water Conservation District,
St. Louis County*

FAST FOOD CHAIN

I'm worried that our fast food chain not only negatively effects our kids, it also impacts wildlife. An open trash dumpster provides an easy way for a tired momma bird to feed her babies food that is not good for them. Please remind your readers to keep their dumpsters closed.

SAVING FRUIT TREES

Before your readers chop down their fruit trees, I would like to tell you what we did to get rid of a mockingbird.

We only had one, but it made a terrible mess on the deck outside our kitchen door. There is a large holly bush beside the deck and the bird drove other birds away and made his home



GOTCHA!

Tammi Elbert of Washington, Missouri, sent in this photo of a snake grabbing a toad. Tammi said she was clearing dried flowers and weeds from her flower bed in the spring when she saw the toad hop. “When I looked closer,” she said, “I realized there was a snake attached to it. The snake finally gave up and let go.”

there. Not only did it like the berries but it also liked our shiny brass doorknobs.

To attract the bird, we put a small piece of bright yellow cloth in a live-trap. Within 15 minutes the bird was caught. We then took it out into the country and set it free.

Bill & Marie Prater, Springfield

MANTIS RECOLLECTED

Reading the praying mantis article reminded of the one I encountered close to 20 years ago, soon after mov-

ing to the Branson area. I went out to hop in our cute little MG and saw what I thought was a large stick poking out from the wheel well.

On closer inspection, I nearly had a coronary to find a bug unlike anything I had ever seen before. I do not exaggerate when I tell you that the mantis would not fit in a shoe box, and its body was the circumference of my thumb.

No, I did not collect it. I went back in the house meekly and waited for it to leave.

Linda Meehan, Mendota Heights, Minn.

The letters printed here reflect readers' opinions about the Conservationist and its contents. Space limitations prevent us from printing all letters, but we welcome signed comments from our readers. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Ask the Ombudsman



Q: I'm teaching my 7-year-old to shoot and we've learned that he's left-eye-dominant, but right handed. I'm trying to teach him to shoot left-handed, but he finds it awkward. Are there other alternatives?

A: I think you have the right idea starting your child early and training him to shoot left handed. This strategy may require a great deal of patience for you both, but in the end I think he'll shoot better. Other alternatives would be to

shoot with only the weak eye open, or use a patch to cover the dominant eye.

You can determine your dominant eye by pointing at a small object with both eyes open then close your left eye. If you're still pointing at the object you're right eye is dominant. If, you're no longer pointing at the object you're probably left eye dominant. Studies tell us that around one third of shooters have weak-side eye dominance. Some learn to compensate and are able to shoot with their strong hand while using the opposite eye.

Eye dominance is covered in Missouri's hunter education training. Hunter education certification is required of all hunters born on or after January 1, 1967, to buy any Missouri permit with which a firearm may be used. Now is a good time to be thinking about enrolling in a hunter education course in preparation for this fall's hunting seasons. Most courses are taught by volunteer instructors who try to make training available prior to the November deer hunting season. Hunters who wait until just before season may not find courses. For a weekly updated schedule of hunter education courses go to <www.missouriconservation.org/hunt/heclass-search.html> or contact your nearest Conservation Department regional office.

Ombudsman Ken Drenon will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Conservation Department programs. Write him at P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573/522-4115, ext. 3848, or e-mail him at <Ken.drenon@mdc.mo.gov>.

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Spring Rain

**A spectacular storm
teaches us how
precious and
life-giving water is.**

by Sara Firman-Pitt
illustrations by David Besenger

Though landlocked, Missouri is very wet. Even the name “Missouri,” in the language of an indigenous tribe, means “Town of the Large Canoes.” Nowadays, our state is known as “Where the Rivers Run.”

With one of the largest concentration of springs in the world and hundreds of miles of floatable streams, you’re never far from water in Missouri. Spring Creek, a tributary of the North Fork of the White River, curves through our property. Each morning I wake to the sight of the light touching the broad strip of creek that runs past our deck. Little Big Spring, just downstream, sends plumes of mist along the valley.

This creek originates from many springs upstream. It is usually crystal-clear since it has passed only through ranch and woodland.

One way to appreciate the valley is to wade up the middle of the stream that runs through it. In summer, it is a marvel to share the cool water with little nibbling fishes, sedate old turtles and territorial birds as you pass various plant communities. In places, the water is deep enough to immerse yourself fully or float as you look up into impossibly green Missouri trees.

We’re on the edge of the Ozark Plateau, which took shape when much of the country was covered by water. Some geologists believe this area was the first part of the continent to emerge from the sea. People from the Rockies and Appalachians like to belittle our flat Ozark ridges. We reply that our mountains aren’t high, but our hollows sure are deep!

My adopted valley seems to have both depth and wisdom. Extensive national forest land keeps neighbors

just far enough apart here. Part of it adjoins our property. Below the surface of this region, hidden streams have carved thousands of caves out of porous limestone. When it rains, water pours out of the hillsides.

Our log house is perched on the rocky bank of Spring Creek. Only about a 15-foot strip of land separates us and the water. The creek is full of contrasts—one minute wild, the next sedate.





One day in spring, a neighbor phoned to tell us a tornado warning was in effect. He knew we do not own a television or listen to the radio. The thunder-and-lightning show was spectacular. We worried about our newly planted garden when big chunks of ice began to fall. The garden survived, but the rain carried on and on.

In the space of a few seconds, we watched the creek burst through the canebrake where the otters live and spread over the floodplain on the opposite bank. Soon the wild brown water carried huge trees and odd items of farm equipment.

Inspired by the Missouri Department of Conservation Stream Team program, we've been working to protect and improve the stream corridor on our land. I've planted more than 100 saplings of native witch hazel, false indigo, spicebush, buttonbush, chokecherry and water tupelo along the creek bank. I wondered if they'd be able to hang on through the flood.

The water rose quickly that morning but stopped within feet of our door. By 7 p.m., the sun broke through and offered what seemed a magical light, though an ominous black cloud lingered in the sky.

We rescued a bluebird that had flown into the woodstove flue for protection. The water introduces us to all



kinds of wildlife. We've spotted snapping turtles basking on old logs or rummaging along the bottom, nearly transparent minnows flocking in the shallows, flamboyant kingfishers, lumbering muskrats and shy river otters.

That glistening evening a grandiose lime-green luna moth decorated our door, along with a gray tree frog that was probably awaiting insects drawn to the outside light. The frog's camouflage did not work well against the cedar logs. We spotted a Baltimore oriole with its flaming-orange chest and a rose-breasted grosbeak at the feeders. They had just arrived to scout the land for the females that would be following.

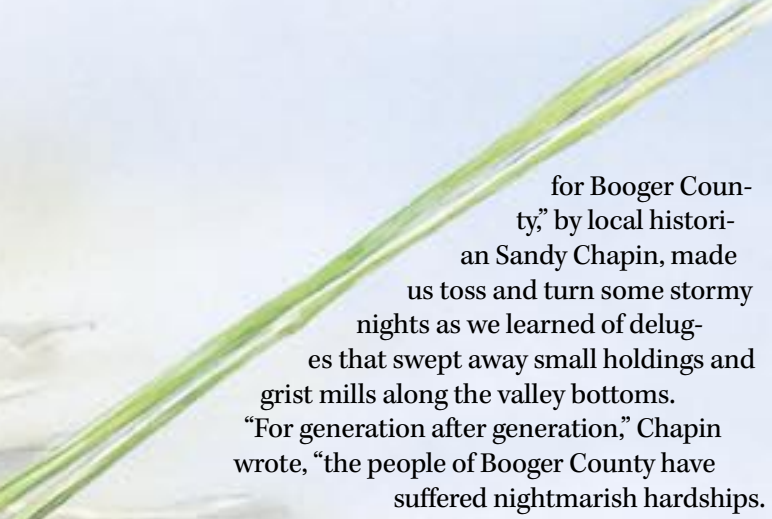
During a lull in the rain, we walked our woodland trails and enjoyed the brilliance of newly washed wild plants. The pokeweed looked so fresh that we picked

some for supper. You have to boil the leaves in three changes of water, but they make a delicious "spinach" on pasta with a little cheese.

Spring is best time for fresh wild greens. I'm learning to identify the edibles and am experimenting with including them in meals. A wild leaf salad of chickweed, young dandelion, plantain and violet leaves decorated with white, yellow and blue violet flowers and dark-pink redbud flowers looks and tastes astonishing.

When the warm rains come, everyone's attention turns to edible morel mushrooms. My husband is fascinated by all the fungi that grows here. Some mushrooms are toxic, so I advise him not to eat anything unless a local expert approves it.

When we first came to Missouri, the book "Searching



for Booger County,” by local historian Sandy Chapin, made us toss and turn some stormy nights as we learned of deluges that swept away small holdings and grist mills along the valley bottoms. “For generation after generation,” Chapin wrote, “the people of Booger County have suffered nightmarish hardships. Floods, epidemics ... are some of the tribulations people here have endured.”

Our friend Daniel Woodrell wrote a novel that was made into the film “Ride With the Devil” about the Civil War here. Desperate folk may have hidden in the caves in the rocky bluffs overhanging Spring Creek to escape soldiers from both sides that marauded these remote communities.

There used to be a village called Roosevelt in the part of the valley where only our house is now. The remains of a grist mill—a single cog—pokes out of the creek bank, not far from a ladder of old timbers where wagons and vehicles crossed the creek before the road bridge was built.

After the flood we found an unusual amount of horseshoes, as well as iron files and old machine parts, in the roadside ditches. Maybe there was a blacksmith’s shop here, too. Just a few minutes walk away at Big Spring was a courthouse and an old school that some of our neighbors attended. Hardly a trace is left of any of these buildings. We put the horseshoes we found over our house and shed doors for better luck.

The grass grew inches after the rain, and the dandelions went to seed. The soil is rich stream sediment with hardly a rock in it. We often find the sharp-edged rocks that native peoples carved for arrowheads. There is plenty of scope for growing things in such soil. We don’t want to use herbicides, especially since we are close to the water, so the wild plants are thriving. Maybe we’ll keep one patch of lawn cultivated and gradually turn the rest into garden and prairie meadow.

We have such a wonderful variety of native trees, shrubs and wild flowers here that there really is no need

to introduce a lot of cultivated garden species. We’ve started making trails throughout the woodland so we can enjoy all that comes up from season to season.

Although we do have some “formal” garden around the house, my favorite garden is the woodland. We try to enhance what is already there. For example, we prune the wild hydrangea so it forms attractive round bushes, and we clear around a maidenhair fern on the path’s edge so that it can flourish in full view. As spring moves into summer, we can hardly keep up with the Missouri jungle.

After the rains, the spring-fed pond in our woodland is a hive of amphibian activity. It’s home to salamanders and newts and frogs aplenty, and we don’t want to disturb their habitat. In midsummer we’ll clean out the old leaves when the creatures are neither breeding nor hibernating. Meanwhile, it’s a delight to walk around there and hear the frogs or see a something slink away under the foliage.

The creek and the many seeps running down the hillside after the rains bring sound to this watery picture. What a delightful picture it is! It’s a reminder of how precious and life-giving water is. ▲





The Missouri Formula for Turkeys

MISSOURI has a long-standing turkey hunting tradition. We were one of the first Midwestern states to restore wild turkeys after years of habitat degradation by early settlers and overexploitation by poachers and market hunters.

Restoration efforts began in 1954 and were complete by 1979. After turkeys were restored in Missouri, their offspring were used to re-establish wild populations throughout the Midwest.

Recently Missouri has topped the charts in turkey harvest and projected turkey populations. Based on the most recent spring turkey harvest, we likely have between 600,000 and 800,000 turkeys in Missouri. Interest in turkey hunting also is growing, and groups like the George Clark Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation continue to contribute funds to habitat management practices that enhance Missouri's turkey resource.

A combination of biological and social factors contribute to Missouri's strong turkey population and high-quality hunting. We have almost continuous turkey habitat from north to south. Many states have areas or regions that provide a mix of woodlands and agriculture, but they also have areas without any forests. Some have extreme winter conditions that limit turkey populations.

In addition, we have formulated regulations to provide ample hunting and viewing opportunity without impacting population growth. For example, our weekday opener spreads hunting pres-

Why is turkey hunting so good in Missouri? BY JEFF BERINGER



CLIFF WHITE

Missouri's spring turkey season attracts 125,000 hunters.

sure. Limiting hunters to one bird the first week in the spring enables weekend hunters to hunt without interference from hunters that have already taken a bird.

The Department also collects good biological information about the state's turkey flock annually from hunters and turkey brood survey cooperators. A number of Missouri turkey research projects have helped unlock the secrets of turkey movements and survival. While all of these combined factors make a strong turkey population, harvest management that maintains a large, adult gobbler population results in high hunter satisfaction.

Protecting the Flock

Since the first "modern" turkey season in 1960, in which 698 hunters killed 94 turkeys over three days in 14



JIM RATHERT

Regulations respond to nesting success and hunter harvest.

counties, Missouri has had a tradition of maintaining and enhancing the spring gobbler hunting. The spring season now lasts three weeks. Hunters can take two turkeys, but we still harvest a preponderance of adult gobblers. While populations ebb and flow in relation to good or poor nesting conditions, we have been able to maintain a buffer of adult birds to supplement poor hatches.

Our season timing is the most important reason we continue to have good reproduction and a healthy population of adult gobblers. Early turkey research in the Ozarks suggested that most turkey reproduction occurred during the first two weeks of April, often considered the first peak of gobbling activity. We purposely do not hunt gobblers during this initial period of the breeding activity. The season opening date, which is the Monday closest to April 20, was set in 1960. It was established to accord with the later breeding and nesting period of turkeys in the Missouri Ozarks.

Timing the season the way we do gives hunters good opportunities to call and bag gobbling birds, while ensuring that most hens are bred. An earlier opener would make gobblers more vulnerable to harvest and leave a

portion of hens unbred. Over time, this could impact reproductive rates and lead to reduced turkey populations.

Weekday Opener

Opening turkey season on a Monday and limiting harvest to one bird the first week reduces interference rates among hunters. Currently, more than 80 percent of spring turkey hunters report little or no interference from other hunters. Our current three-week season further reduces daily hunting pressure because it encompasses three weeks instead of two.

About 12 percent of hunting trips and 19 percent of harvest occurs on opening day. Hunters take about 8 to 10 percent of their trips on weekends. That's also when about 7 to 9 percent of the harvest occurs. About 67 percent of harvest occurs during the first week, but only 5 to 8 percent of hunters take two birds. Therefore, hunting pressure tends to be light during the second and third weeks. Perhaps most importantly, the generous season gives weary hunters an excuse to pass up hunting on windy or rainy days, knowing they have more hunting days available.

Tracking Turkeys

Accurate biological information forms the basis for modern day turkey management decisions. It helps biologists understand if turkey populations are growing, declining or remaining statewide and regionally.

Almost 2,000 people record observations of hens and poults each summer. This provides statewide and regional information on the annual turkey hatch. Requiring hunters to check-in their turkeys enables us to calculate the harvest rate of turkeys per square mile so we can identify problem areas or recognize local or regional population shifts.

Turkey Timeline



1960
First modern day spring season, 3 days in 14 south Missouri counties, 1 bird bag and season limit



1963
Season length increased to 4 days

1966
Season length increased to 5 days



1967
Season length increased to 7 days

1970
Rules change to allow hunters to harvest a male turkey or turkey with a visible beard enacted. Before this, only male turkeys were legal game



1971
Season length increased to 11 days

We can also measure hunter success rates. Since we implemented the three-week season in 1998, turkey harvest per square mile of forest and hunter success rates have continued to climb. This suggests that the season extension has not negatively impacted our turkeys. Had the impact been negative, we would have had the information and could have responded quickly.

Do you ever wonder why the Department records spur lengths at check stations or requests spur lengths from people checking birds by phone? Spur length is a good indication of a turkey's age. Adult toms with spurs shorter than 1 inch are generally 2-year-old birds. Those with spurs from 1 to 1 3/8 inches are 3 to 4 years old, and those with spurs longer than 1 1/2 inches are the grandpas.

We look at the distribution of spur lengths each year and compare them to past years to see if age structures have changed. If we were to see a decline in a certain age group, we would know that something is happening in the turkey population.

The ratio of jakes to adult birds is another way we measure the pulse of the turkey population. If we began to see a preponderance of jakes in the turkey harvest, we might need to scale back on bag limits or season length. On average, jakes account for 20 to 30 percent of the harvest.

Turkey hunting has evolved since the first season in 1960. Today we have more than 125,000 turkey hunters, compared to just 698 in 1960. Annual harvests have increased from 94 birds to more than 60,000 birds. Because of hunters' willingness to provide biological infor-

mation, coupled with knowledge gained from turkey research projects and the continual monitoring of poult production, we can keep a close watch on Missouri's turkey population and manage it to provide better opportunities for turkey hunters. ▲

TURKEY SEASON PROMISING

Despite a below-average hatch in 2004, Missouri hunters can look forward to another excellent season this spring.

Facing similar prospects, hunters harvested 60,744 turkeys last spring, breaking the previous record of 58,421 turkeys taken in 2003. Franklin County led the state in 2004. Hunters there took 1,099 birds. Runner-up was Laclede County with 1,071 birds, followed by Howell County with 985 birds.

With extended cool temperatures and rain that lasted well into summer, nesting conditions weren't optimal for turkeys in 2004. However, the sheer number of turkeys in Missouri should produce enough birds to keep the population stable.

Hunters encountered fewer jakes during the spring 2004 season, so there may be fewer 2-year-old birds in the woods than usual in 2005.

— Bryan Hendricks



JIM RATHERT

Careful management helps keep Missouri's wild turkey population strong.

1972
Season length
increased to
14 days

1973
Bag limit
increased to
2 birds



1974-75
Bag limit
reduced to
1 bird due to
poor hatch in
1973

1976
Bag limit
increased to 2
birds, but only
1 per week

1985
All 114 coun-
ties opened to
spring turkey
hunting

1998
Spring turkey
season length
extended to
3 weeks, and
2 birds could
be taken on
consecutive
days during
second and
third weeks



2001
First youth
season
established





An illustration of a diver in the foreground, wearing a yellow diving mask and a blue wetsuit, looking towards a large, brown catfish in the background. The catfish has a long, thin whisker and a large, round eye. The background is a dark green, suggesting an underwater environment.

Myths From the DEEP

Monster fish in angling stories grow bigger with every retelling.

by Jeff Finley

illustrations by Mark Raithel

“There are catfish at the base of the dam big enough to swallow a man whole! Divers inspecting the dam saw them and swore they’d never go down again.”

You've probably heard that rural legend. It's told about almost every dam and every river in Missouri, and in most of the rest of the country.

In my job of taking care of the Conservation Department's Mobile Aquarium, I swap stories with thousands of Missourians every year. This story and a few others surface often enough that I've investigated to see whether they might have some truth to them.

Unfortunately, most of these big fish stories can't stand up to scientific scrutiny. An examination proves them to be myths.

For example, catfish just don't get big enough to swallow humans. We do have two species of catfish. Blue catfish and flathead catfish in Missouri have the potential to reach enormous proportions. The current Missouri record blue cat weighed 117 pounds and was caught on the Osage River in 1964. The international record blue cat wasn't much bigger. It weighed 121 pounds when it was taken from the Texas side of Lake Texoma in January 2004.

Those are modern-day records. A 150-pound blue catfish was found in a St. Louis fish market in 1879. It came from the Mississippi River.

There's even a record of one twice that size. In "Steamboating Sixty-five Years on Missouri's Rivers," Captain William L. Heckman wrote about blue cats weighing 125 to 200 pounds and mentioned one from the Missouri River in Gasconade County that weighed a

staggering 315 pounds!

A life of eating and lounging results in the growth of some hefty flathead catfish, too. The current world-record flathead weighed 123 pounds. The Missouri record flathead catfish weighed 94 pounds and was taken from the St. Francis River in 1971. Every summer you'll read stories of flatheads caught that exceed 60 pounds.

Habitat loss, fishing pressure, pollution and detrimental alterations to our native ecosystems are likely the reasons we no longer see leviathan catfish like those reported long ago. Could they still exist today? Of course, but even fish that size couldn't swallow a human.

One reason divers might report huge fish may be that, underwater, objects appear about 25 percent larger than they actually are. This is due to the refraction of light in water through the lens of a scuba mask.

Another test of these stories is that the people telling



them aren't the ones who saw the catfish. It's always some anonymous person, a friend of a friend, some friend of an in-law's, or someone else of unknown identity who isn't available for verification. This is a crucial element of all myths—rural, urban or fishing.

Another myth connected to catfish has to do with their "stingers." People often avoid or warn others to avoid the whiskers, or barbels, of catfish because they believe they can inflict a painful or poisonous sting.

Barbels are as limp as cooked spaghetti and couldn't possibly hurt you. These fleshy organs help the fish smell, taste and feel their surroundings.

Catfish can inflict a painful sting through their pectoral and dorsal spines. These spines, located within the pectoral and dorsal fins, can be very sharp, especially in smaller fish.

The fish lock the spines in place when they feel threatened. The spines aren't poisonous, but they can painfully puncture your skin and transfer some of the fish's protective covering of slime into your hand. Inside a wound, the slime produces an unpleasant stinging sensation.

The best way to handle a catfish when removing it from a fish hook is to place the fish's right pectoral spine between your index and middle finger and your thumb behind the left pectoral spine. Push the dorsal spine flat beneath the heel of your palm. Smaller catfish are best grabbed from beneath, placing the index finger and middle finger beneath the pectoral spines.

It's best to handle fish as little as possible, and watch those spines!

Drum Beats

Our freshwater drum are the source of a common myth. Most people I talk with know that drum, also known as sheepshead, white perch, stone perch, rock perch, croaker, grunt or gaspergou, make a very curious noise.



However, almost everyone thinks that drum make this noise by rattling together two large bones that are inside the head of a drum.

Freshwater drum do have bones in their head. They are called otoliths. Most fish have them, but those of a drum are unusually large. Otoliths were once sought by Native American Indian tribes for making jewelry and are still collected by anglers today, usually as lucky charms.

These bones are pretty but are not the source of the grunting sound emitted by the drum. Instead, the sound is created by vibrating specialized muscles associated with the fish's swim bladder.

The ocean dwelling relatives of the freshwater drum make a drumming noise as a way to communicate during spawning activities. Their abnormally large otoliths, along with their highly developed lateral line, assist them in hearing one another.

The freshwater drum's unusually large bones are used to a lesser degree for hearing. They help the fish keep its balance.

On the Bill

Otherwise fish-savvy folks have come up with plenty of stories to explain the paddlefish's big bill.

Paddlefish, or spoonbill, are only found in the Mississippi River system of North America. They are among the largest freshwater fish in the country. The Missouri state-record paddlefish, caught in 2002, weighed 139 pounds, 4 ounces. Paddlefish in other areas have reached 160 pounds.

Don't worry. This critter won't eat you, either. Paddlefish are close relatives of sharks, but they have no teeth. Paddlefish feed by sieving microscopic animals called zooplankton from the water with specialized combs located on the inner margin of their gills. These combs are called gill rakers.

Many people have told me that paddlefish use their bill, or rostrum, to dig through and stir up mud on the

bottom of rivers and lakes. No evidence of this behavior is in scientific literature.

Scientists are not completely certain how the rostrum functions, but they believe it acts much like a compass and an antenna to help paddlefish navigate and feed in the muddy waters of the big rivers.

In addition, the dense meshwork of highly developed nerves on the rostrum works like an antenna to help young paddlefish locate colonies of plankton for food. In controlled conditions, when there was not enough light to see, paddlefish could detect and capture plankton approaching from below, above and to the sides of their rostrum.

Mature paddlefish rely on the rostrum less for feeding, but it may also be used to help them avoid obstacles and hazards in the water.



Pond Builders

In the course of conversations, many people have told me how wonderful it is that the Conservation Department builds ponds for people.

That's certainly not accurate, either, but you can obtain help in building a pond. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides federally funded programs that share 75 percent of the cost of building a pond in landscapes that erode easily. You may contact your local NRCS office or Conservation Department private land conservationist to help you apply.

Once the pond is built, the Conservation Department can provide fish for stocking if your pond meets certain criteria.

Many people think that if we provide fish for your pond, you have to open your pond to the general public to fish. That's inaccurate, too. It remains your pond and your private property, so you control who is allowed to fish. We only ask that you ensure that the pond is fished regularly.

Fish and fishing lend themselves to stories, and human nature being what it is, it's inevitable that those stories become more wonderful and mythic with each retelling.

Ever since I was young, I snorkeled a lot, but I never once saw a catfish big enough to eat me. On the other hand, this guy who lived down the road knew this guy whose neighbor used to be a diver who did structural repairs on dams and bridges, and he said.... ▲





Don't let any part of your gobbler go to waste.

by Mark Goodwin
photos by Cliff White



Turn Wild Turkey Into Terrific Table Fare

Is there a more perfect game bird than the wild turkey? Most Missouri hunters would say no. Calling in a strutting tom provides more thrills and challenges than almost any other kind of hunting. Hunters know that you have to do a lot of things right to fool a gobbler

Given the effort and expertise required to bag a wild turkey, there's no reason to stop doing things right when it comes to preparing your wild turkey for the table. If you take care of your perfect game bird—

even if it is a mature gobbler—it can produce near perfect table fare.

Quick Cleaning

Your first decision will be whether to pluck or skin the bird. Plucking the bird is better if you plan to smoke or roast it whole. However, plucking is time consuming and sometimes difficult, even if you scald the turkey to loosen the flight and tail feathers.

Plucking is particularly difficult in the fall. Most birds are molting then, with new feathers emerging from soft feather sheaths. These growing

feathers often tear when you try to pull them out, leaving portions of the feathers and sheaths in the skin.

Skinning is the easier first step toward converting a wild turkey to food. It also leaves open a number of cooking options that will not dry out the bird.

To skin a turkey, hang it up by its feet and snip off the wings at their elbows. Cut the skin at the tail to remove the fan, then, using your fingers, pull down on the skin. You'll have to work it around the legs and wings, but it should pull away easily.



Slice strips from the turkey breast, cutting across the grain of the meat. Season the strips and soak them in milk before rolling them in coating. Pan-fry coated pieces in oil, turning once to brown both sides. Let them cool on paper towels.



Pull the skin down to the neck and then cut through the neck to detach the skin and head.

To remove the entrails, cut a T-shaped slit between the legs, just below the lower tip of the breastbone. Reach in and pull out all internal organs. The heart, gizzard, liver, and intestines come out easily. Make sure that you also remove the lungs, which are tucked tightly against the ribs and the kidneys. These are tucked into two spaces on each side of the spine in the lower back.

Use a garden hose with a pressure nozzle to wash out any small pieces of entrails that may remain in the body cavity. Under gently running water, remove small pieces of feathers that might have stuck to the meat during the skinning process.

Salmonella contamination may occur when a turkey's intestinal

contents come in contact with the meat. A nice part of harvesting wild turkey is that you can control every step in the processing. By being careful when you remove the entrails, you can eliminate any chance of contaminating the meat with the bird's offal.

Frying

The breast is the prime cut of meat on a wild turkey. Not only is it delicious, but turkey breast is easy to prepare. To prepare it for cooking, use a sharp knife to remove both slabs of meat off the breastbone.

To fry wild turkey breast, cut the meat across the grain into finger-sized strips. Soak these in milk or buttermilk, then roll the strips in a mix of flour, seasoned salt and pepper. Proper seasoning is essential to good eating. Take a pinch of the

Showcasing Turkeys

There's more to a tagged tom than just good eating. For example, you can easily convert the spurs into an eye-catching display. With a hacksaw, cut through the leg, just above and below the spur. Use a pocket knife to pry off the scales and scrape off any connective tissue. Use a small drill bit to remove any marrow, then string the spurs on a piece of rawhide. Alternate with beads of your choice. The necklace looks great at a black-powder rendezvous, or you can hang your spur collection from the rear view mirror of your vehicle or on a wall as a reminder of memorable hunts.

Many hunters use turkey feathers for wing and tail displays. If you have enough of these, offer the feathers to local Boy Scout and Girl Scout organizations. They often use turkey feathers in craft projects.

seasoned flour between your fingers and taste it. If it has a distinct flavor of seasoned salt, with a hint of pepper, you've got it right.

Heat about 1/3 inch of oil in a fry pan to about 375 degrees. Place floured turkey strips in the oil and cook until the strips brown on one side, about 5 minutes. Turn the strips over, being careful not to knock off the batter, and reduce heat to 275 degrees. Cook until this side browns, about 10 minutes. The last minute or two of cooking, turn up the heat to crisp the coating.

You can also deep fry the breasts by dropping them into 375 degree oil. When the strips float, they are done.

Remove the turkey strips from the oil and place on a double layer of absorbent paper toweling.

Smoked Turkey

Proper seasoning is also important when smoking the turkey breast. Dozens of recipes for meat rubs are available on the Internet. My favorite is a mix of ¼ cup lemon pepper, 1 tablespoon of garlic powder, 1 teaspoon each of dry mustard and paprika and ¼ teaspoon of onion powder. Sprinkle and rub the mixture over both sides of the breasts until all are well covered, then refrigerate the breast in a covered container for 8 hours or overnight.

Before smoking, cover the turkey breasts with strips of bacon. Use toothpicks to hold the bacon strips in place. Use bacon pieces to fill in where the strips don't cover. The bacon will keep the outer layer of breast meat from browning and drying out during the smoking process.

Place both breasts on a smoker equipped with a pan that holds water above the coals. This will provide moist heat. Stick a meat thermometer into the middle of the thickest part of the breast. When the internal temperature reaches 150



Deep-fry chunks or strips in 375 degree oil using a batter or dry coating. The pieces float when fully cooked. Fried turkey makes a hearty main course.



degrees, the turkey breast is done. Cooking typically takes about three to four hours. Do not cook the turkey to the 180 degree temperature recommended for domestic fowl. That much heat will dry out wild turkey meat.

When the meat is done, remove the bacon from the breasts and wrap the breast halves in several layers of aluminum foil. Then wrap them in a bath towel and place them in a small cooler. This allows the meat to retain moisture while it cools. When you are ready to serve, cut the meat into ½-inch strips across the grain.

Making soup

Some hunters simply cut the breast from a wild turkey carcass and throw away the rest. What a waste! Although the remaining meat may be a little too tough for most tastes, it makes a great base for flavorful

soup. Here's my favorite recipe:

INGREDIENTS

1 turkey carcass with thighs and legs
2 (14.5-ounce) cans of chicken broth,
plus water to cover
2 (8-ounce) cans of tomato sauce
1 large onion (finely chopped)
5 stalks celery, chopped
2 bay leaves
2 large carrots, chopped
1 clove garlic, chopped
1 tablespoon garlic salt
1 tbs. fresh ground pepper
1 tbs. parsley
1 tbs. thyme
1 ½ cup frozen peas
8 ounces of fine egg noodles

In a large soup pot, add finely chopped onion, two celery stalks, chopped bay leaves and chopped garlic clove. Remove the legs and thighs from the carcass so they fit better in the pot, then add carcass, legs and thighs, along with chicken

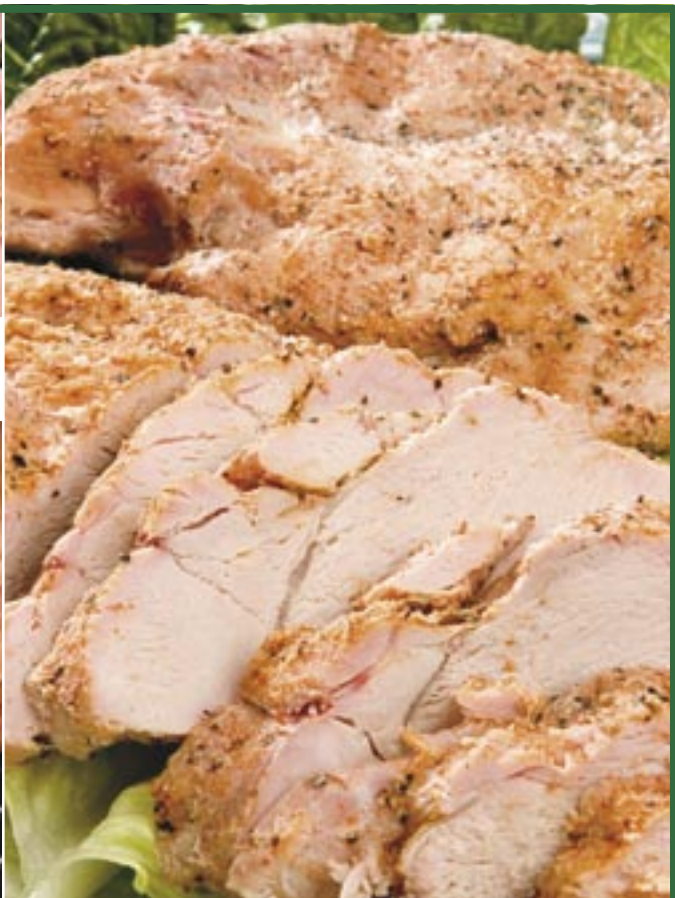
broth, tomato sauce, garlic salt, ground pepper, parsley and thyme.

Add water to cover. Bring to a boil and simmer, covered, for 2 hours or until you can easily insert a fork into the drumstick meat. Strain broth into another pot, removing the vegetables and carcass. You may have to strain twice. Return strained broth to soup pot.

Remove meat from the legs, thighs and carcass. Chop meat into fine pieces in a food processor and add to broth. Add remaining chopped celery, return to a boil and simmer, covered, for 90 minutes. Put sliced carrots in 45 minutes before finishing and 8 ounces of fine egg noodles 10 minutes before finishing. Just before serving, add frozen peas. Flavor, to taste, with seasoned salt. This soup, served with a grilled cheese sandwich, makes a tasty meal any time of year. ▲



For smoked wild turkey, wrap seasoned breast slabs in bacon strips. Cook until the meat reaches 150 degrees.





Make delicious soup from the carcass, legs and wings of the turkey. Boil the pieces with seasoning until you can easily separate meat from bones. Add vegetables and noodles to the strained broth. Chop the meat in a blender or food processor before returning it to the soup. Simmer until vegetable and noodles are tender. Serve with a sandwich.





Tree Planting Breakthrough!

I propose that Missourians
change the way that we plant trees.

by Ann Koenig, photos by Cliff White



Tree fanciers all have one thing in common. We all plant trees incorrectly. More specifically, we all plant trees too deeply. Maybe 10 percent of the people reading that sentence are thinking, “Yes, most everybody else does plant trees too deep, but not me.”

Well, I’m talking about you, too. Everyone plants trees too deeply. It seems to be ingrained in us.

Many of us have perspired over a newly planted tree envisioning someday, someone resting under its green shade, staring blissfully at a robin’s nest in its branches, or watching a deer grazing on its acorns on a crisp fall afternoon. However, by planting trees too deep in the soil, we dramatically reduce the tree’s capacity to ever reach its potential.



When a tree is planted too deeply, the roots tend to surround the tree and slowly strangle it.

How is it that our tried-and-true tree planting methods are not so true? For starters, trees are planted too deeply at the tree nursery. Compounding the problem, modern tilling practices to control weeds at nurseries tend to throw dirt on top of tree roots, burying them even more. The trees we purchase these days come to us with up to 12 inches of extra dirt on top of their roots.

I think almost everyone assumes that the roots of the trees they have purchased are just under the soil line of the container or burlap. They're not. You might already have six or more inches of soil above the roots.

We compound the problem when we dig a little deeper hole for the soil ball to ensure the tree is anchored solidly and is well braced.

To top it off, we often encase the lower trunk in a big

Does it really matter if trees are planted too deeply?

The answer, we are beginning to understand, is yes.

pile of mulch, entombing the roots more deeply.

Take a critical look at the trees in your yard or local park. Do the tree trunks flare out at the base, or do they tend to look more like telephone poles, going straight down into the ground with no root flare? The lack of flare is likely because the roots are buried too deeply. If, however, you look at trees that were not planted but grew naturally, notice how all of their trunks flare out at the ground (except pines).

Does it really matter if trees are planted too deeply? The answer, we are beginning to understand, is yes.

When tree roots are planted too far underground, secondary roots grow toward the surface to compensate. Rather than growing up and then out from the tree, some roots tend to grow up and then in or across, close to the trunk. Sometimes they even grow around the trunk.

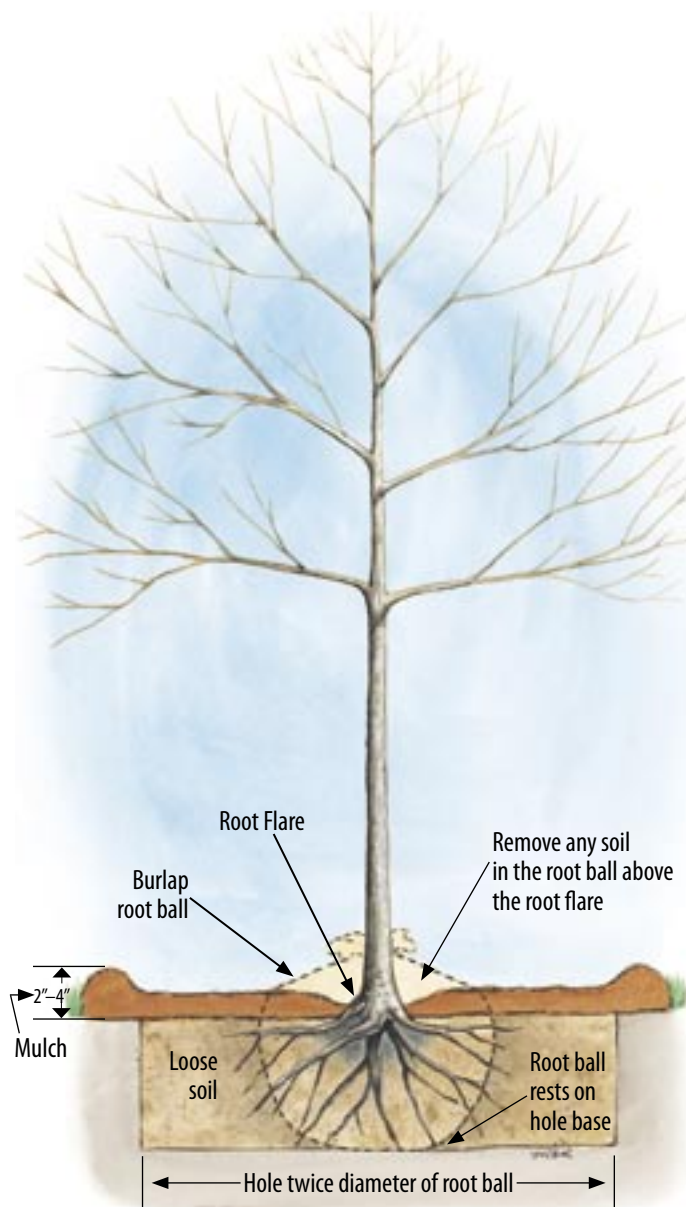
For the first few years, these oddly growing roots don't seem to have any effect. As the tree matures, the buried trunk grows into these roots. Usually, about 10 to 20 years after a tree is planted too deeply, these roots girdle the underground trunk like a noose. The results are slowed growth, lost tree vigor, and premature death. In fact, a five-year study by the University of Minnesota shows that more than 80 percent of sugar maples that were in decline had stem girdling roots.

Besides stem girdling roots, trees that are planted too deeply often have problems with below ground trunk rot and root suffocation. Likewise, when a tree's roots are too deep, the tree tries to produce a whole new system of roots at the correct depth. This also slows the tree's growth and reduces vigor.

The Right Way

No matter what form of tree you choose to plant, whether balled-and-burlaped, container-grown or bare-root, the key is to determine where the topmost root (called the root flare) is growing off the trunk. You then have to ensure that the root flare is at (or ideally just above) the soil grade of the planting site.

Balled-and-burlaped trees are more cumbersome to handle than container-grown trees, and their soil balls



MARK RAITHEL



Plant a bundled tree so that its topmost roots are at or slightly above ground level.

often fall apart when unwrapped. Therefore, the method for planting differs slightly.

For balled-and-burlaped trees, probe the top of the soil ball close to the trunk to find the first roots. You can do this with a knitting needle, a clothes hanger or a stout wire. Measure the distance from the top of the soil ball to the root flare. Next, subtract that distance from the total depth of the burlaped soil ball. For instance, if you probe down 5 inches before you find the root flare, subtract 5 inches from the total depth of the burlaped soil ball. You should dig a hole to that depth, or even 1 to 2 inches shallower.

The width of the hole should be wider than the root ball. It is also good to break up the hole edges with a shovel so that emerging roots have looser soil to penetrate. However, the bottom of the hole should be firm. By digging the hole after measuring the root ball, you ensure the planted tree will be at the proper level.

Place the balled-and-burlaped tree in the hole and ensure that the trunk is straight. At this point the soil ball is still intact. After positioning the tree correctly, cut away the burlap and wire cage from the ball. Also, remove any twine or wire that is wrapped around the base of the trunk.

Next, use a spade to remove all of the dirt on the root ball above the root flare. At this time it is good to lay your shovel handle flat on the ground across the planting hole and check to see that the root flare is at or 1 to 2 inches above the soil grade of the planting site. If so, then fill soil back in the sides of the hole being sure not to add soil on top of the root flare.

Container trees are lighter than balled-and-burlaped trees, and their soil balls tend to remain intact when disturbed. Therefore, you don't need to use a wire probe to find the root flare. Instead, pull the soil ball out from the container and remove the excess soil off the top of the soil ball until you find and uncover the root flare. Then, measure the depth of the "new" root ball and dig the planting hole to that depth or 1 to 2 inches shallower.

On container-grown trees, roots may have already begun to encircle the trunk. Straighten or loosen any of these roots to keep them from eventually becoming girdling roots.

The root flare on a bare root seedling is much easier to spot since it will not be hidden in soil. Check to see that the roots are not growing in a J-shape or encircling the trunk. Then, plant the tree in a hole as above.

When you finish installing the tree, thoroughly soak the entire planting hole, including the root ball, with water. Then, add mulch 2-3 inches deep and as wide as you like around the tree. Keep the mulch off the trunk.

Your mulch ring should end up the shape of a flattened doughnut, rather than a volcano. Stake the tree only if necessary using a soft, loose tie that will not abrade the young bark of the tree.

That's the right way!

This new method for tree planting is no more strenuous than what most of us have been doing all along. The difference is in finding the root flare before digging the hole, uncovering the flare from excess soil, and not planting the tree too deeply. This will help your tree reach its potential much faster and improve its vigor.

For more information on how to plant trees and to obtain a free diagram, contact your local Missouri Department of Conservation forester.

A video titled Preventing Stem Girdling Roots details this method of planting trees. It can be ordered in Spanish or English from the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association. Call 615/633-4986 for ordering information. ▲



Numerous small surface roots indicate improper planting.



Women meet to hone outdoor skills

Fresh air, sparkling water and the company of other women who enjoy the outdoors will make the Missouri's Outdoor Women gathering June 10-12 a weekend to remember.

The event will be held at the Windermere Conference Center, a state-of-the-art facility on 1,300 acres at Lake of the Ozarks. The event is a chance for women of all skill levels to learn or hone outdoor skills from expert instruction. Workshop offerings may include basic fishing, canoeing, archery, handgun shooting, shotgun shooting, rifle shooting, Dutch-oven cooking and nature hiking. The early registration deadline is April 23. Late registrations will be accepted until May 14.

For more information, contact Regina Knauer, 417/895-6881, ext. 1068, <Regina.Knauer@mdc.mo.gov> or Jackie Keller, 573/751-4115, ext. 3292, <Jackie.Keller@mdc.mo.gov>.

Plotting a food strategy for upland birds

One of the best things you can do for bobwhite quail and other upland birds is to plant small food plots. For maximum benefit, you should:



Plant long winding strips at least 30 feet wide

- ▲ Choose locations near low, brushy cover, such as sumac patches or blackberry thickets.
- ▲ Plant on south- and west-facing slopes so the sun will melt snow on sunny days, exposing food.
- ▲ Eliminate grasses and prepare seed beds by disking.
- ▲ Apply a balanced fertilizer and add lime if soil test indicates the need.
- ▲ Choose high-energy food plants, such as sorghum or millet. Sorghum varieties designed for forage are less susceptible to deer damage.
- ▲ Use light herbicide applications to help crops produce seed while permitting a desirable amount of weedy cover to develop. Consult an agricultural products store for herbicide type and application rate.
- ▲ Plant enough food plots so you can let half lie fallow each year. This strategy ensures both food and brood-rearing habitat.

NO MORE TRASH! BASH GROWS

The No MORE Trash! bash is expanding from a week to a month, and offering more help for those who want to make the Show-Me State litter free.

Last year's week-long event netted more than 13,500 bags of trash, indicating the need for a longer event. This year, the departments of Conservation and Transportation designated April as No MORE Trash! month.

Stream Teams, Adopt-A-Highway groups and concerned individuals are encouraged to organize cleanups on streams and highways. Window stickers, posters, brochures and other promotional items are available to event organizers. For details about how to get involved, visit <www.nomoretrash.org> or call 573/522-4115, ext. 3294.



Mushroom fest set

Get ready for great fun and good eating at the Third Annual Missouri State Championship Mushroom Hunt and Festival in Pike County April 29-30.

The event, which includes a competitive morel mushroom hunt, mushroom auction, mushroom foods and mushroom-themed booths, starts with evening activities April 29 in Louisiana, Mo. The hunt runs from 10 a.m. to noon April 30 on designated land. Trophies are awarded to three contestants who bring in the most mushrooms, and to those who find the largest and smallest mushrooms.

The \$25 entry fee is tax deductible. Event proceeds go to the non-profit Dixon Whitney Foundation, which administers a Pike County cultural center. More information is available by phone at 573/754-7988 or by e-mail at <teres@big-river.net>.



A rendering of the new Cape Girardeau nature center.

Cape Girardeau nature center to open

Southeast Missouri residents soon will have a multi-purpose conservation education facility at their disposal. The grand opening of the Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus Nature Center May 14 and 15 will mark the start of a new era of conservation education in the state's southeast quadrant.

The Cape Girardeau facility will be more than a museum. It will feature interactive programs for every age and outdoor interest and educational resources for teachers, parents, scouts, 4-H clubs and other civic organizations.

The 20,000-square-foot facility in Cape Girardeau County Park North has a 160-seat auditorium. Three classrooms are equipped for everything from science experiments to woodworking and wild-game preparation demonstrations.

The nature center will have educational displays, dioramas and aquariums documenting southeast Missouri's cultural history as well as its plants, animals and ecosystems. However, visitors also will get to learn archery, fishing and other activities through hands-on experience.

Teachers will find the nature center a tremendous resource for materials and instructors for their classes. Southeast Missourians who want to share their love and knowledge of nature will find outlets for their contributions in an active volunteer program.

The Cape Girardeau facility is the sixth of its kind in Missouri. Other conservation nature centers are located in Jefferson City, Kirkwood, Blue Springs, Kansas City and Springfield. Admission is free to all visitors.

STATE EXEC GETS GROWING GIFT

Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder recently received a growing gift of a tree bundle, compliments of Missouri fourth-graders and the George O. White State Forest nursery.



Students from central Missouri were on hand when Kinder signed a proclamation designating April 1 as Arbor Day in Missouri. This year, 120,000 fourth-grade students across Missouri received bald cypress, silky

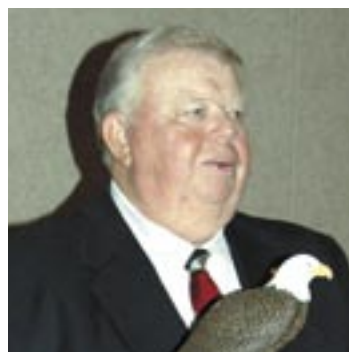
dogwood and willow oak seedlings from the state forest nursery. The trees will grow for decades around schools and homes statewide. To learn more about Arbor Day, visit <www.arborday.org>.

Conservationist of the Year

Growing up south of Kansas City in the 1930s and '40s, Duane Addleman helped his dad cut trees for fence posts and piled up the resulting brush, creating ideal homes for wildlife. He didn't know it then, but he was forging ties to the

land that would one day earn him the Conservation Federation of Missouri's highest honor, Conservationist of the Year.

Addleman was one of eight Missourians who received 2004 awards at the Conservation Federation's annual meeting at Lake of the Ozarks Feb. 11. Looking back on a lifetime of conservation work, Addleman credits childhood experiences for charting his path. He became



Duane Addleman

an avid trapper and hunter. Later in life he got interested in tree planting to benefit game animals and got hooked on tree planting itself. To date, he has planted more than 100,000 seedlings.

Addleman also has served on the Conservation Federation's Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Ways and Means Committee and Bylaws Committee. A CFM life member, he can usually be found at the annual Fall Hunting Classic at Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World, promoting the Conservation Federation and recruiting new members. He also spends as much time as he can nurturing his grandchildren's love of nature.

The Conservation Federation also honors conservation work in specialized fields each year. Other 2004 honorees include:

- ▲ Youth Conservationist Martin Brantner, Kansas City.
- ▲ Conservation Educator Al Vogt, Columbia.
- ▲ Forest Conservationist Clint Trammel, Salem.
- ▲ Wildlife Conservationist Lonnie Hansen, Columbia.
- ▲ Water Conservationist Gerry Boehm, St. Charles
- ▲ Professional Conservationist Mike Hoffman, Jefferson City.
- ▲ Conservation Communicator of the Year Jim Low, Jefferson City.



From left: Jim Low, Mike Hoffmann and Lonnie Hansen



HABITAT HINT: Help hungry hummers

Masses of brilliant red, pink and orange blossoms entice hungry hummingbirds to yards and gardens. Columbine, fire pink and Indian paintbrush are among early-blooming native wildflowers that catch hummers' sharp eyes. Domesticated varieties may not produce nectar, causing hummingbirds to move elsewhere.

The blossoms of red buckeye trees and green hawthorn shrubs also provide nectar and help fill out a home landscape plan.

Summer- and fall-blooming native wildflowers attractive to hummers include royal catchfly and spotted jewelweed.

For more information about building a hummingbird-friendly garden, visit <www.grownative.com>. Click on "Native Plant Info" and then "Plant Search." For a home landscape guide, write to *Grow Native!*, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180. —Barbara Fairchild

Making America's biggest rivers better

If improving a river is your idea of a good day's work, mark April 30 on your calendar. On that day, volunteers are needed for coordinated cleanups of both the Missouri and the Mississippi rivers.



Missouri River Relief will hold a cleanup at Columbia Bottom Conservation Area at the confluence of the nation's two mightiest rivers. The event will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Besides making the cleaner, you will see the rivers as few people ever do.

Boats will take volunteers to sites along the rivers to pick up

trash. Wear work clothes and boots. Work gloves and trash bags will be provided.

The Conservation Department, Bass Pro Shops and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will provide boats to transport workers and trash. Items collected will be sorted for recycling and removed from the rivers on a special garbage barge.

For more information, contact Missouri River Relief at 573-443-0292, email <riverrelief@riverrelief.org> or visit <www.riverrelief.org>.

BETTER COUNTRY LIVING

Missourians who want to improve their land for wildlife can gain valuable information from Country Land Care packets assembled by the Conservation Department.

No matter whether you own .3 or 3,000 acres, you can manage your property to encourage more wildlife. Ninety-three percent of the state's land is privately owned.

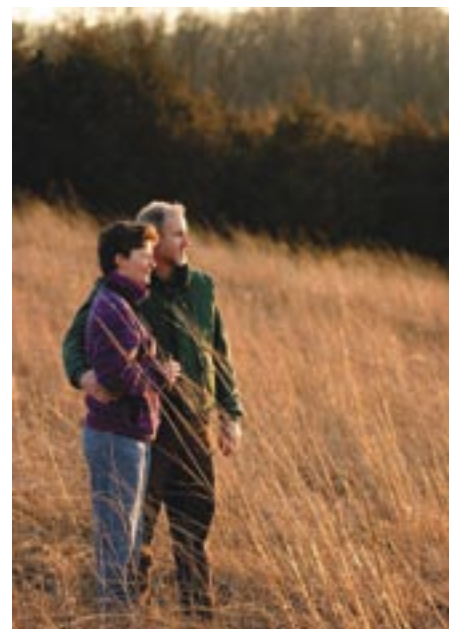
"Private land is where conservation must either succeed or fail," Conservation Department Director John Hoskins said. "We are committed to helping landowners succeed."

The packets contain publications valuable to Missouri landowners. These include:

- ▲ Native Plants for Your Farm
- ▲ Wildlife Management for Missouri Landowners
- ▲ Forest Management for Missouri Landowners
- ▲ The Missouri Pond Management Handbook
- ▲ Wildflower Favorites
- ▲ On the Edge: A Guide to Managing Land for Bobwhite Quail
- ▲ Rich Grasslands: A Guide to Help Improve Your Land for Profit, Aesthetics and Wildlife.

The packets also include contact information for regional offices and the Department's private land conservationists.

To obtain a Country Land Care packet, visit <missouriconservation.org>, or write to Country Land Care Packet, Missouri Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180.



Let Us Show You How

with products from the Missouri Department of Conservation



Native Landscaping for Wildlife and People

01-0102 - softcover—\$18.00

This handsome and colorful book tells you how to use native Midwestern plants to beautify your property and benefit wildlife. Written by Dave Tylka, a native plant landscaper and biology professor, it includes charts that detail the best wildflowers, grasses, trees and shrubs for sun and shade. One chapter is devoted to "quick tips" for attracting particular wildlife species to your property. 184 pages

Jim Rathert In Focus

01-0270 - softcover—\$18.00

This new book showcases the work of Missouri Department of Conservation photographer, Jim Rathert. For 19 years he's delighted *Missouri Conservationist* readers with exquisite photographs of wild Missouri. From MDC's comprehensive photo files and Jim's recent treks afield, we've compiled his most spectacular images. Stunning to behold, the 120-page book is more than just a coffee table centerpiece, however. Through text rich with his own philosophy, Jim shares his knowledge and techniques for photographing in the wild. Get behind the lens with Jim and see Missouri's prairies, wetlands, forests, glades and flowing waters as you never have.

Missouri Wildflowers

01-0021 - softcover—\$12.00

The fifth edition of Denison's classic work makes identifying common Missouri wildflowers easy. Its 297 color photographs are arranged by flower color and blooming time. Plant characteristics, habitat and range are provided. 256 pages • Revised 1998

A Paddler's Guide To Missouri

01-0052 - spiralbound—\$6.00

A Paddler's Guide to Missouri features 58 rivers in the state. Although the streams most used by canoeists, kayakers and float anglers are in the southern part of the state, many paddlers are discovering other waters in which to dip a paddle, including the Missouri River.

For this reason, the Conservation Department has replaced its former river guide—*Missouri Ozark Waterways*—with this one, which includes central and northern streams that paddlers and anglers can enjoy. Floaters familiar with the previous book by Oz Hawksley will find updated maps and details of those same Ozark streams, along with maps of more rivers to explore.



Outdoor Calendar

Hunting

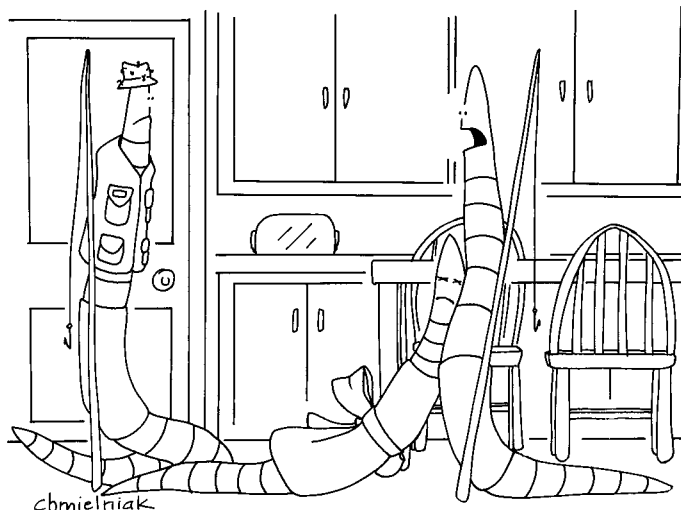
	open	close
Coyotes	5/9/05	3/31/06
Deer/Turkey Archery	9/15/05	to be announced
Deer Firearms	11/12/05	to be announced
Groundhog	5/9/05	12/15/05
Rabbits	10/1/05	2/15/06
Squirrels	5/28/05	2/15/06
Turkey (spring)	4/18/05	5/08/05
Youth Resident	4/9/05	4/10/05

Fishing

Black Bass (most southern streams)	5/28/05	2/28/06
Bullfrog	sunset	midnight
	6/30/05	10/31/05
Nongame Fish Snagging	3/15/05	5/15/05
Paddlefish	3/15/05	4/30/05
Paddlefish on the Mississippi River	3/15/05	5/15/05
Trout Parks	3/1/05	10/31/05

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the Wildlife Code and the current summaries of Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations and Missouri Fishing Regulations, the Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Information, Waterfowl Hunting Digest and the Migratory Bird Digest. To find this information on our Web site go to <<http://www.missouriconservation.org/regs/>>.

The Conservation Department's computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800/392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to <<http://www.wildlifelicence.com/mo/>>.



"I told her you and I were going fishing, and she fainted!"

FISHING TOURNEY BENEFITS KIDS

The Make-A-Wish Foundation will get proceeds from the 13th Annual Take A Kid Fishing Tournament at Table Rock Lake's Port of Kimberling Marina May 14. Each team must have one contestant over age 18 and one school-age (K-12) angler not over age 18. The entry fee is \$50 per boat.

Cash prizes will depend on the number of teams. A drawing for a Harley-Davidson Buell Blaster will follow the weigh-in. Each team also will be entered in a big-bass contest, with the first-place winner taking home 60 percent of the pot and the rest going to the second-place winner. Tournament headquarters is the Kimberling Inn. For entry forms or other tournament information, call 417/887-1640. For special tournament rates on lodging, call 800/883-5551.



AGENT NOTEBOOK

Wildlife in an urban environment

or even around the farm can present challenges. Almost every day, I get calls or reports from folks about problems with urban wildlife.

A common theme associated with nearly every wildlife problem is that something is attracting the animals to a home or property. When you have a problem, ask yourself "What is attracting this animal to my property?" If you can answer this question, you are well on your way to solving the problem.

For example, most animals are attracted by food. Leaving cat or dog food outdoors is literally inviting raccoons and opossums to your property. The best solution is to arrange the feeding times so that you don't leave food available.

Canada geese love a manicured lawn next to a pond's edge. Leaving an 8- to 10-foot strip of tall grass or planting a living fence of small shrubs around the pond will usually discourage these lawn grazers.

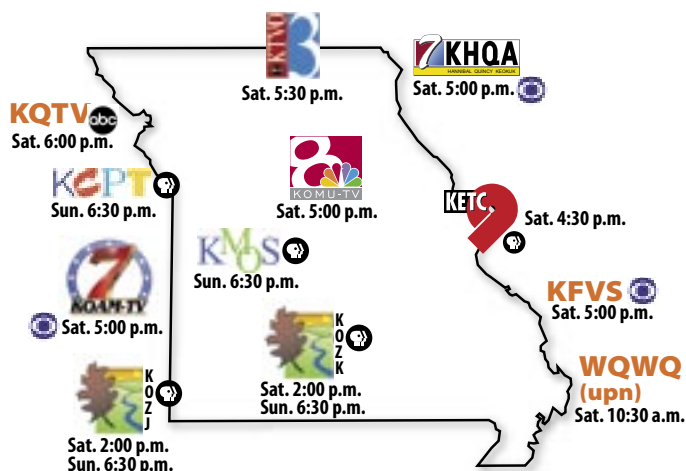
Although most folks feel they have a better quality of life with wildlife around, conflicts sometimes arise when these critters get too close to our homes, pets, and family members. If you have a wildlife problem in or around your home or property, contact your local Conservation Agent. We can suggest strategies and give technical advice, and in some cases we can loan equipment that will solve your wildlife problems. — Dave Carlisle, Buchanan County





Program Schedule

Television the way Nature intended!



SHOW SCHEDULE

April 2 & 3—TURNER'S MILL

Take a rare look at days gone by along the Eleven Point... and visit with the "Sportsman's Friend."

April 9 & 10—STAMP OF CHARACTER

Join us as we turn back the hands of time... to an era when Missouri was in the midst of a logging boom.

April 16 & 17—BEST OF "TRIBUTE"

See how the outdoors provides the backdrop for some emotional stories.

April 23 & 24—YOUTH DEER HUNT

See how a newly formed partnership may provide at least part of the solution to the growing number of deer in Missouri.

April 30 & May 1—PROTECTION CHECKS

Go behind the scenes and see how conservation agents stop poachers in their tracks.

OTHER OUTLETS

Branson Vacation Channel
Brentwood Brentwood City TV
Cape Girardeau Charter Cable Ed. Ch. 23
Chillicothe Time Warner Cable Channel 6
Hillsboro JCTV
Independence City 7
Joplin KGCS
Kearney Unite Cable
Maryland Heights Cable America 10
Mexico Mex-TV
Noel TTV
O'Fallon City of O'Fallon Cable
Parkville City of Parkville
Perryville PVTV

Raymore Govt. Access-Channel 7
Raytown City of Raytown Cable
St. Charles City of St. Charles-Ch 20
St. Louis Charter Communications
St. Louis City TV 10
St. Louis Cooperating School Districts
St. Louis DHTV-21
St. Louis KPTN-LP/TV58
St. Peters City of St. Peters Cable
Ste. Genevieve Public TV
Springfield KBLE36
Sullivan Fidelity Cable-Channel 6
Union TRC-TV7
West Plains OCTV

Meet Our Contributors



Jeff Beringer is a resource scientist with the Conservation Department. He works in Columbia. His responsibilities include deer, turkey and grouse management. He enjoys taking his two sons hunting and fishing.

Jeff M. Finley formerly operated the Conservation Department's Mobile Aquarium. He is currently a fishery biologist with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Columbia. Jeff, his wife, Anna, and their three children live near Hartsburg, where they enjoy the natural wonders of the Missouri River.



Sara Firman-Pitt was born in the United Kingdom and grew up in Kenya, Fiji and Brazil. She said Ozark spring storms remind her of her tropical childhood. She and her husband, Ralph, have created a small retreat center on Spring Creek in Douglas County specializing in a unique form of water therapy.

Freelance outdoor writer **Mark Goodwin** lives in Jackson and teaches biology at Jackson Senior High School. He enjoys a wide variety of outdoor recreation and spends the bulk of his free time with family and friends in the Missouri Ozarks.



Ann Koenig lives in Columbia with her husband and two young sons. She has worked as a Conservation Department forester for eight years. Granddaughter of a stove mill owner, great niece of a WWII naturalist, and daughter-in-law to owners of a Century Farm, she has strong ties to conservation.



To learn about bobwhite quail management and Missouri's quail recovery efforts, check out

www.missouriconservation.org

Keyword: quail



Dwarf crested iris (*Iris cristata*)

This small, native iris usually blooms in April within its restricted southeastern Ozarks range. Dwarf crested iris spreads by rhizomes and creates wonderful islands of color in the gravelly soils of ungrazed open woodlands. It is four to six inches tall with wide flowers. — *Jim Rathert*